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ABSTRACT

This booklet is one of 34 in a series on childhood education programs in support of a White House Conference on Children, December 1970. The Goldsboro Program included 1,165 first, second, and third grade pupils in ungraded classes at seven schools. The pamphlet describes how the classroom organization and atmosphere, the instructional materials, and the language experience approach to reading are used to meet the two primary program objectives: (1) to help the child acquire a positive self-image, and (2) to motivate the child to grow intellectually. (MLF)

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Model Programs

Childhood Education

Responsive Environment
Model of a Follow Through Program

Goldsboro, North Carolina

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Model Programs

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Model of a Follow Through Program

Goldsboro, North Carolina

A classroom environment which responds to children rather than one which requires them to respond to adults results in confident, capable children

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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FOREWORD

This booklet is one of 34 in a series of promising programs on childhood education prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. The series was written under contract by the American Institutes for Research for the Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Office of Child Development and the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Within the broad area of childhood education the series includes descriptions of programs on reading and language development, the disadvantaged, preschool education, and special education. In describing a program, each booklet provides details about the purpose; the children reached; specific materials, facilities, and staff involved; and other special features such as community services, parental involvement, and finances. Sources of further information on the programs are also provided.

The community of Goldsboro, situated in a rural tobacco farm area of North Carolina, is involved in programs designed to help its children become educated, confident individuals regardless of their cultural background. Community support for the Head Start program in Goldsboro is strong. Driving into town, one might see a Head Start banner display over the street or a sign in a shop window about Head Start Week. However, to assure that the gains children make in Head Start are lasting, Goldsboro wanted to do more for its children and started a Follow Through program.

Follow Through, which began under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, is designed to build upon the gains that poor children have made in the Head Start preschool program. It begins in kindergarten or first grade when Head Start ends and continues through the third grade.

Goldsboro is well suited to Follow Through because about 25 percent of its families earn under $3,000 per year, and the town has poor areas consisting of small, shabby homes situated on unkept roads. About 50 percent of its approximately 40,000 people are black. Over the past few years about 10 percent of the school district enrollment has transferred to private, all-white schools; and the students in the public schools are now about 58 percent

black and 42 percent white. While dealing with the problems of school integration, Goldsboro has attempted to improve the quality of education in the public schools so that the parents will feel that the public schools are providing a quality education. Follow Through is one program begun to upgrade the education for children in the Goldsboro public schools.

Follow Through first started in Goldsboro in 1968-69 with first-grade children. Second graders were added the following year, and in the current school year (1970-71) third graders are also included in the program. Thus, Goldsboro has extended Follow Through up through third grade. In 1970-71, 1,165 children in the first, second, and third grades at seven Goldsboro schools are in ungraded Follow Through classes. Half of these children are from low-income families and thus receive breakfast and lunch at school, medical and dental care, and social and psychological services in addition to the regular instructional program. Including these special services, the program costs about $450 per child per year in addition to the $425 the district normally spends. Most of the low-income students have been in Head Start or a similar preschool program. Two-thirds of the children in the program are black.

THE RESPONSIVE ENVIRONMENT MODEL

While all Follow Through programs are designed to meet the needs of children in their early school years, not all Follow Through programs are alike. The program that the Goldsboro schools is implementing is called the Responsive Environment Model. This model is an outgrowth of the work done by Dr. Glen Nimnicht at the New Nursery School in Colorado. Dr. Nimnicht, now on the staff at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development in Berkeley, California, is involved in a developmental program called Education Beginning at Age Three and is the sponsor for the Responsive Environment Model. He and his staff at the Far West Laboratory work closely with the Goldsboro schools in planning and implementing the program. They provide curriculum materials and teacher training procedures. Program advisers are trained by the Far West Laboratory, and they help the teachers in the day-to-day operation of the program and also administer the tests to evaluate the program.

PROCESS MORE IMPORTANT THAN CONTENT

In planning an educational program one must "know" children--what they're like and how they learn. The Responsive Environment Model recognizes that children must be respected as individuals and that they learn best when they're interested in what they're learning. The specific content they learn isn't nearly as

important as the process they go through in learning it. Children also learn in different ways and at different rates. Classrooms in Goldsboro have been organized around these principles.

The classroom environment in this program is called "responsive": it responds to the child. He can explore the classroom freely and spend as much time in any one place as he wishes. However, what he does is in a sense controlled by what is available to him in the classroom. It is structured so that he is likely to make certain discoveries about his world. As a Goldsboro teacher stated, "It provides them (children) with opportunities to explore their thoughts and actions in a kind of 'controlled freedom.'" The teachers are part of this responsive environment in that they respond to the children, encouraging them to pursue what they're interested in and to express themselves. Teachers never insist that a child participate in a particular group activity. A responsive environment can be described as follows:

- It permits the child to explore freely.
- It informs the child immediately about the consequences of his actions.

- It allows self-pacing. (Events happen at a rate determined by the child.)
- It permits the child to make use of his capacity for discovering relations of various kinds.
- It is structured in such a way that the child is likely to make a series of interconnected discoveries about his physical, cultural, or social world.

"CONTROLLED FREEDOM" CLASSROOMS

Most of the Goldsboro Follow Through classes have about 54 children with two teachers and two teacher assistants. Often classrooms have been made larger by removing walls between adjoining rooms. However, in some of the older schools, the classrooms have remained small--about 27 children in a class with one teacher and one teacher assistant. For each classroom a program adviser is available for consultation and help.

So that the children may pursue freely what they're interested in, the classroom is organized into several learning centers. A child may go from one center to another and spend as much time as he wants to at any one center. Learning centers are structured so as to expose the children to selected experiences. Typical

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learning centers include the following:

- A listening center containing a tape recorder and tapes, a record player and records, and a headset
- A reading center with a variety of books and perhaps a comfortable chair and some of the teachers' professional books
- A viewing center with a filmstrip projector and screen
- A writing center with paper and writing materials
- A science center containing measuring devices and other scientific equipment
- A painting center equipped with art media
- A math center
- A dress-up center containing grownups' clothes, hats, and shoes
- A materials center containing games, toys, blocks, and a cardboard box file containing learning episodes (short lessons). The learning episodes are provided by the Far West Laboratory and describe how to use a game, a toy, or other material to help a child learn a specific skill or concept.

Each classroom is also equipped with an area rug, about 12' by 15', where the children can work, play, and relax.

Upon walking into a Follow Through classroom, a visitor might feel that the classroom is noisier and more disorganized than the usual classroom. However, the open, free atmosphere is soon sensed and the "controlled freedom" becomes obvious. Children are scattered around the room working in small groups or individually at the various learning centers. Teachers and teacher assistants are usually working with a small group or helping one or two children. The children move freely from one activity to another and seem interested, involved, and happy. They generally keep on working when visitors enter the classroom but are comfortable talking with them and eager to show off their work and read their stories.

The fact that the children are comfortable with strangers is an indication of the success of at least one of the primary objectives of the program--to help the child to develop a positive self-image. The other primary objective is to develop the child's intellectual ability. These two objectives are considered to be interconnected and equally necessary. It would be unrealistic to give the child a positive self-image without the ability to back

it up just as it would be unfortunate for a child with a great deal of ability not to have any confidence in that ability.

THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH TO READING

How the two primary objectives of the program are interwoven is well illustrated by the method with which the children learn to read. The Van Allen language experience method, which moves from speech to print, is used to teach reading. The child's own oral language that he brings from home is respected and used as the basic ingredient in the method. Using his own language and vocabulary, the child dictates stories that are relevant to his own life and experience. As he dictates them, someone else, usually a teacher or teacher assistant, writes them down for him. Then as he learns to read his own stories, he begins to write them rather than dictate them. Finally he moves at his own rate to reading books and the stories of others. Since the child's own language and experience are respected in this method, his self-image improves. And as his communication skills improve, so does his intellectual ability; language is viewed as the tool of thought. Improving communication skills is especially beneficial to the environmentally deprived child; therefore, Goldsboro children spend about 80 percent of their time on language arts activities. As

one teacher stated it, "The child's language facility is enriched with new pride in expressing himself."

In the language experience approach to reading, teachers and teacher assistants are encouraged to:

- Read something from children's literature each day
- Discuss topics of interest with children
- Provide a place for children to express their ideas with art media throughout the day
- Develop a place and provide time for children to choose writing as a recreational activity
- Tell stories from real and imaginary experiences
- Author books which record the real and imaginary experiences of children
- Use multisensory materials for basic instruction

Other methods are also used to teach reading in accordance with the principle that children learn in different ways. A child might follow along as the teacher reads a book containing phrases

that are frequently repeated, or he might listen to a tape recording of a book and follow along in that book as he listens. And finally, the child is free to do recreational reading whenever he likes. A variety of books are available and the child can read whatever interests him and hopefully learn to think of reading as a pleasurable, relaxing activity.

IMPROVING THE CHILD'S SELF-IMAGE

Accepting the child's oral language as an approach to reading is one classroom practice for improving the child's self-image, but not the only one. An interesting activity in which a child's feelings are recognized is called "Guess How I Feel Today." This is centered around a large chart in the writing center on which a child draws a picture of how he feels. Then other children write a story about how he must feel by looking at his picture. Mirrors are also available in the classroom and often there will be a "dress up" corner where children can try on clothes to make them feel more grown up. The children also have access to a Polaroid camera. For a disadvantaged child to suddenly see himself in a picture is often a thrill. According to the program's philosophy, a child with a positive self-image has the following characteristics:

- He likes himself, his family, and his people.
- He believes that what he thinks, says, and does makes a difference.
- He believes that he can be successful.
- He believes that he can solve problems.

But believing he can solve problems is not enough. The actual ability to solve problems is the desired outcome in the process aimed at developing a child's intellectual ability. To acquire this ability:

- The child must develop his senses and perceptions because these are the raw materials for thought.
- The child must develop his language skills because language is the tool of thought.
- The child must develop his ability to form concepts because concepts help organize thoughts.
- The child must develop problem-solving ability because problem solving is the purpose of thought.

A RESPONSIVE LEARNING BOOTH

One component of the program to develop problem-solving ability is the "learning booth," a new and novel responsive environment that encourages the child to discover relationships. A learning booth is a small room, often an adapted closet or dressing room, equipped with a typewriter with bold primary type and manned by a booth attendant. Each first-grade classroom is equipped with one. When the child first comes to the learning booth, he is free to experiment with the typewriter and explore the booth. The booth attendant is there to answer questions and to vocalize each letter or space that the child strikes on the typewriter. Each day the child is asked if he would like to "play with the typewriter." He has the option of refusing or of staying about 10 minutes. Children are usually eager to go to the booth. If a child continues to go, he eventually learns to type specified letters, words, and stories. Whenever he is about to make a mistake, the booth attendant turns off the typewriter with a foot switch. The booth experience usually results in rapid language development, an added achievement since the booth's primary purpose is to be a responsive environment that poses problems and encourages the discovery of their solutions.

THE CHILD GETS IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK

An important characteristic of a responsive environment is that it informs the child immediately about the consequences of his actions. This is accomplished in the booth by the booth attendant vocalizing what the child does and the typewriter showing what he does. In the classroom, the child receives feedback from teachers, teacher assistants, and other children. However, the classroom is also equipped with various self-correcting toys, games, and equipment designed to enable the child to work independently, to compare his work with some standard, and, if necessary, to correct himself. Wood-inlay puzzles, nested cups, depth cylinders, and lotto and matrix games are examples of self-correcting toys and games. Equipment that provides feedback includes tape recorders, Polaroid cameras, and language masters. Each classroom also has many teacher-made games and materials which are often designed to be self-correcting.

THE CHILD CAN PACE HIMSELF

Another characteristic of a responsive environment is that it allows the child to set his own pace. For example, the child goes to the learning booth as often as he desires; in the classroom he is free to stay with any one activity as long as he wishes and to move from center to center as long as he doesn't restrict the freedom of another child. To help him solve interactional

problems (those involving people) as well as physical problems, the teacher encourages him to take part in a large-group activity once or twice a day; however, he is never forced to participate. The language experience approach used to teach reading and the mathematics program also allow the child to set his own pace. Mathematics in the classrooms centers around the Math Workshop program published by Encyclopaedia Britannica, which allows children to discover and advance independently. The program is also suited to small-group work and, in accordance with the responsive environment philosophy, the material does not need to be used page by page nor does each page have to be completed.

Classroom activities that are popular with the children include writing stories, listening to tapes and records, watching filmstrips, playing educational games, reading books and the stories of other students, performing mathematics activities, doing art work, and manipulating counters and other concrete objects. In addition to the regular classroom activities, students take about four or five field trips a year to places such as a park, a museum, stores, an air force base, and a picnic area.

MOTIVATION IS INTERNAL

In a responsive environment none of the activities depend on extrinsic rewards such as gold stars, cookies, or praise. A child does something because he wants to, not because he's trying to avoid punishment or gain a reward that has nothing to do with the activity itself. The child's motivation is internal rather than external. As one teacher explained it, "The pride the child feels because of his accomplishment is his reward." *Autotelic*, a term used to describe an activity done for its own sake, describes both the learning booth and the classroom environments.

WHAT PARENTS DO MATTERS

Parents as well as their children are involved in the responsive environment program. The program sponsor feels that deprivation of a child is directly related to the amount of his interaction with parents and other adults, that problems such as fatherless homes, alcoholism, large families, and cramped living quarters will probably have to be solved before a parent involvement program can be truly effective. However, in spite of these problems a good program can reduce the parents' hopelessness by showing them that what they do can make a difference in their children's education. The objectives of the parent involvement program are to (1) improve the quality of exchange between parents

and their children and (2) decrease parents' feelings of alienation and powerlessness.

Each of the Goldsboro schools having Follow Through classes holds a series of parent meetings where teachers explain and demonstrate the procedures used in the program and make recommendations to the parents concerning what they can do at home to help their children. Videotapes of classroom activities are shown. In addition, parents are encouraged to visit the classrooms and examine the instructional materials. Mothers meet after school with a nutritionist for help on buying and planning meals and to see videotapes of the children. There are also plans to set up a toy library, and parents will have training sessions on the use of toys in the home.

Many parents are directly involved in the classroom as teacher assistants, booth attendants, and volunteers. They receive special training for these tasks. Booth attendants get a week of onsite training by the Far West Laboratory, and teacher assistants attend a 2-week workshop conducted by the program advisers and the director. In the hiring of teacher assistants, parents of children in the program are given preference. Parents are also

involved through a policy advisory committee in making recommendations for improvement in the program. Half of the members of this committee are parents.

PROMISING RESULTS

Although the policy advisory committee has strongly supported the Responsive Environment Model, the actual value of the program depends on whether its objectives are being accomplished. The Far West Laboratory is conducting a testing program to evaluate the model. To test the objective concerned with the child's self-image, a teacher rating scale and a teacher-administered student test are being developed; to test the objective dealing with intellectual ability, the Metropolitan Readiness Test was administered to the Goldsboro first graders as a pretest and a posttest in 1968-69. Preliminary results indicate considerable improvement after 1 year in the program; however, the Far West Laboratory is concerned with the long-term effects of the program and is thus reluctant to make preliminary judgments. Eventually children in the Responsive Environment Model will be compared with children in other models and in traditional classroom settings.

Teachers and administrators alike are enthusiastic about the program. At first teachers found it difficult to change their

teaching patterns, but now they don't want to return to the more structured program. During one of their workshops they compiled a booklet of "Games and Learning Activities" to share with other teachers. Some of the teachers in the self-contained classrooms have also begun to use "responsive environment" techniques. As the director of elementary education put it, "Follow Through has provided the 'shot-in-the-arm' which our Early Childhood Education Program needed."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

For further information refer to *The New Nursery School*, a book and pamphlets prepared by Glen Nimnicht, Oralie McAfee, and John Meier for General Learning Corporation, New York. The set costs $16.95 and may be ordered from the Judy Company, 310 North Second Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401.

Information is also available from the program sponsor:

Dr. Glen Nimnicht, Director
Education Beginning at Age Three
Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development
Claremont Hotel
One Garden Circle
Berkeley, California 94705
(415) 841-9710

The following mimeographed paper on the model is available from the program sponsor:

Glen Nimnicht, "The Responsive Model Follow Through Program."

Arrangements to visit the Responsive Environment Model of a Follow Through Program in Goldsboro may be made through:

Mrs. Doris Shaw, Director
Follow Through Program
Box 1797
Goldsboro, North Carolina
(919) 734-0561

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MODEL PROGRAMS--Childhood Education

This is one in a series of 34 descriptive booklets on childhood education programs prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. Following is a list of the programs and their locations:

The Day Nursery Assn. of Cleveland, Ohio
Neighborhood House Child Care Services, Seattle, Wash.
Behavior Analysis Model of a Follow Through Program, Oraibi, Ariz.
Cross-Cultural Family Center, San Francisco, Calif.
NRO Migrant Child Development Center, Pasco, Wash.
Bilingual Early Childhood Program, San Antonio, Tex.
Santa Monica Children's Centers, Calif.
Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction, Salt Lake City, Utah
Dubnoff School for Educational Therapy, North Hollywood, Calif.
Demonstration Nursery Center for Infants and Toddlers, Greensboro, N.C.
Responsive Environment Model of a Follow Through Program, Goldsboro, N.C.
Center for Early Development and Education, Little Rock, Ark.
DOVACK, Monticello, Fla.
Perceptual Development Center Program, Natchez, Miss.
Appalachia Preschool Education Program, Charleston, W. Va.
Foster Grandparent Program, Nashville, Tenn.
Hartford Early Childhood Program, Conn.
Philadelphia Teacher Center, Pa.
Cognitively Oriented Curriculum, Ypsilanti, Mich.
Mothers' Training Program, Urbana, Ill.
The Micro-Social Preschool Learning System, Vineland, N.J.
Project PLAN, Parkersburg, W. Va.
Interdependent Learner Model of a Follow Through Program, New York, N.Y.
San Jose Police Youth Protection Unit, Calif.
Model Observation Kindergarten, Amherst, Mass.
Boston Public Schools Learning Laboratories, Mass.
Martin Luther King Family Center, Chicago, Ill.
Behavior Principles Structural Model of a Follow Through Program, Dayton, Ohio
University of Hawaii Preschool Language Curriculum, Honolulu, Hawaii
Springfield Avenue Community School, Newark, N.J.
Corrective Reading Program, Wichita, Kans.
New Schools Exchange, Santa Barbara, Calif.
Tacoma Public Schools Early Childhood Program, Wash.
Community Cooperative Nursery School, Menlo Park, Calif.

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